

Pamphlet Box B2

REMEMBER YOUR PRELATES:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE SOLEMN REQUIEM

OF

COLIN FRANCIS MACKINNON,

ARCHBISHOP OF AMYDO,

IN

ST. NINIAN'S CATHEDRAL, ANTIGONISH,

September 30, 1879.

BY

R. MCGILLIVRAY, P. P., ST. JOSEPH'S.

HALIFAX, N. S.:

PRINTED AT THE MORNING HERALD OFFICE.

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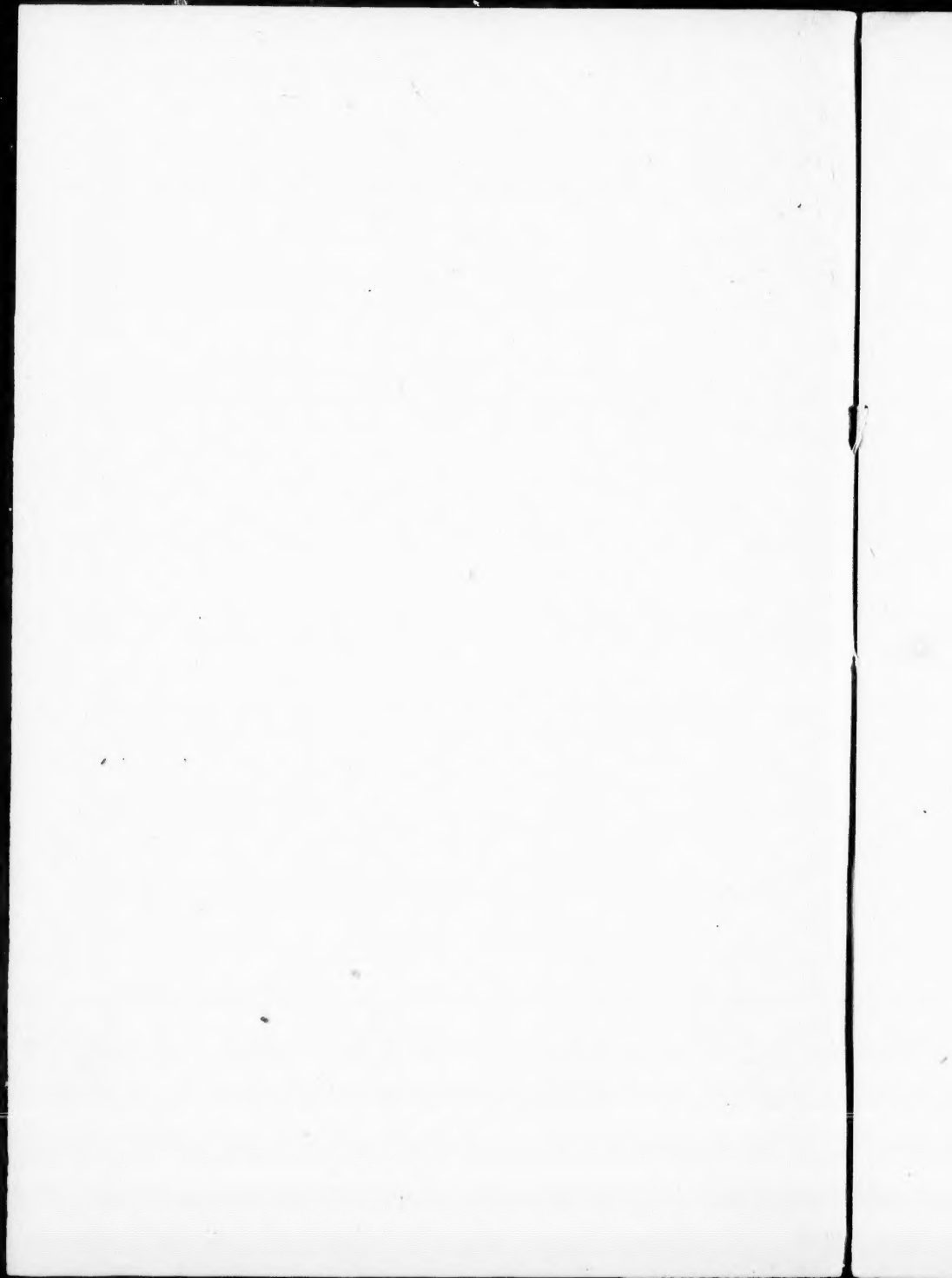
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PREFACE.

On Friday, the 26th of September, his Grace Archbishop McKinnon expired at his residence in Antigonish. On the previous Wednesday he had an attack of paralysis, which rendered him unconscious until he breathed his last. The last rites of the Church were administered to him by Father H Gillis, his confessor. At his last moments, and during the three previous days, he was surrounded and attended upon by Bishop Cameron and a large number of his clergy.

The funeral took place on Tuesday, the 30th September. No sooner did the holy and illustrious prelate surrender his soul to God than messages were sent to the neighbouring bishops, announcing the sad intelligence of his death, and although all of them were far away from their homes, on their episcopal visitations, and had to travel over difficult roads, yet such was their love, respect, and veneration for him that they strained every point to be present at his funeral, to pay their last homage to their noble and kind-hearted friend.

St. Ninian's Cathedral was skilfully draped for the occasion. The services for the dead begun at 9½ a.m. A Requiem High Mass was celebrated by Rt. Rev. Bishop Cameron, assisted by the Very Rev. Neil McLeod as Archdeacon, Rev. Canon Power of Halifax, as Deacon, and Rev. Fr. Martell, as Subdeacon and Rev. Edward Murphy, as Grand Master of Ceremonies. In the Sanctuary were present, Most Rev. Michael Hannan, Archbishop of Halifax; Rt. Rev. Peter McIntyre, Bishop of Charlottetown; Rt. Rev. Dr. Rogers, Bishop of Chatham; Rt. Rev. Monsignor Frein, of New Orleans, Domestic Prelate to His Holiness; Very Rev. James McDonald and Dr. Chaisson, of Charlottetown; Revds. Canon Carmody and Fr. Kearns, of Halifax; Rev. Mr. Morrissey, of Chatham; Revds. W. B.

McLeod, J. V. McDonell, H. Girroir, R. McDonald, A. McGillivray, R. McGillivray, H. Gillis, W. Chisholm, Dr. McGregor, J. Chisholm, M. Tomkins, W. Leblane, A. McKenzie, R. Grant, A. J. McGillivray, P. Fiset, Dr. A. Cameren, Dr. A. Chisholm, James Fraser, James Quinan, D. Cameron, R. McDonald, W. McPherson, D. J. McIntosh, F. Broussard, T. Richard, M. A. McPherson, M. Laffin, Dr. Joseph Quinan, Wm. B. McDonald, and P. Fougerson, of the Diocese of Arichat.

I beg leave to introduce to the public the sermon delivered on the occasion of the solemn Requiem, by the following remarks, slightly changed, which had been written by myself and published in the *Halifax Morning Herald* of March 1, 1877, on the occasion of the lamented deceased's resignation of the See of Arichat.

The testimony of works is an excellent test for passing judgment upon anybody's life. It is a test to which our Divine Master himself appealed; a palpable evidence to which an apostle was forced to appeal in vindication of his life. It is a principle to whose award no friend of Bishop McKinnon need fear to appeal. His life stands out prominent for its works. At his accession the country was new, churches few, and the clergy fewer still.

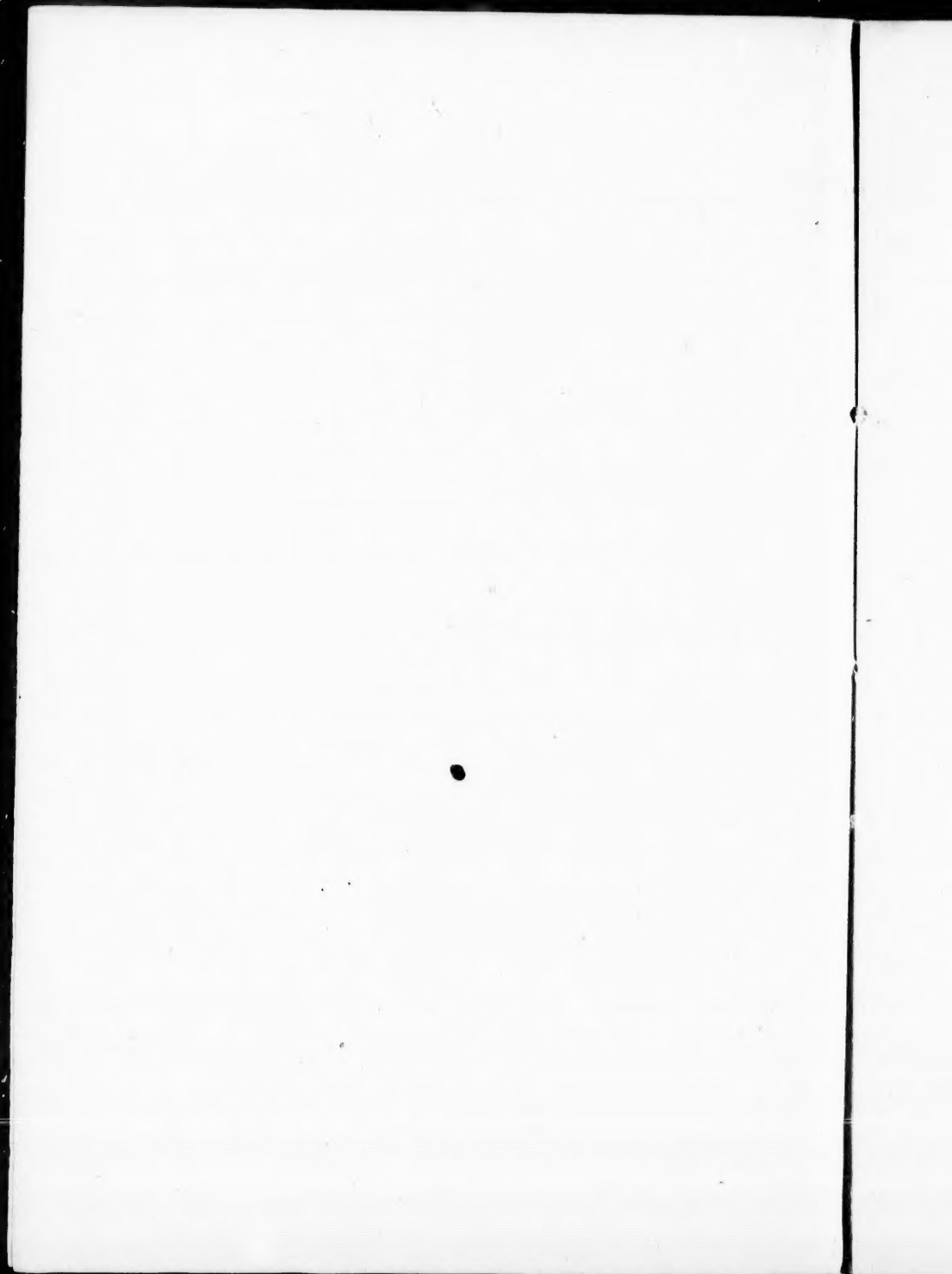
The causes which induced the Scotch to quit their highland homes and the Irish to become exiles from their native soil, exerted still a baneful influence upon them in their new homes. They belonged chiefly to the poor and illiterate class. At the time, Catholics had but few, if any, representative men. But the reproach has been removed from us by the educational zeal of Bishop McKinnon. Early in his priesthood, he founded a School at St. Andrews, which sent forth several clever and distinguished men. Shortly after his consecration, he founded St. F. Xavier's College at Antigonish, which soon became the centre of learning and emulation, and higher aspiration for the whole diocese. It has sent forth representatives to every department of life, a numerous clergy to the diocese, a judge to the bench, an orator to the Senate of the Dominion,

representatives to the local and general Parliaments, lawyers to the bar, physicians and teachers to the country. The impulse which he has given to education, the status to which he has raised his people, is the most noble and enduring work of the Prelate's life. Every parish, every corner of the diocese, possesses its church and its pastor. The glory of his Episcopal See, and the crowning work of his successful administration, is the beautiful cathedral of St. Ninian, Antigonish. And with the most inadequate means, he has achieved all the work by his personal zeal and spirit of self-sacrifice, and the magnetic influence his own busy, earnest life exerted upon everybody who worked with him. Every work to which he set his hand, has prospered. Noble and brilliant is the record of his good works. And now that he has finished his course, and entered upon his rest, his memory will be long preserved in the grateful affections of clergy and laity. His beautiful and exemplary life is appropriately limned in the words of the ecclesiastical poet :

"Qui, pius, prudens, humilis, prudicus
Sobriam duxit sine labe vitam."

R. M. G.

ST. JOSEPH'S, 8th October, 1879.



SERMON.

Remember your prelates, who have spoken the word of God to you; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Heb. XIII. v. 7.

The plaintive dirge which yet resounds in our ears, the emblems of mourning on every side, the presence of so many of the clergy in the Sanctuary, your own sorrowful and subdued countenances bear testimony to the great loss which we all have sustained. All this solemn ceremonial tells of the extinction of a bright and shining light in our midst. It is the last sad tribute of nature and of religion to one whose presence in the Sanctuary so often lent dignity and grace to the offices of religion. The crosier, the cross, the mitred head too plainly indicate who it is that is laid there. The most conspicuous figure in Eastern Nova Scotia for the last forty years is no more. The model priest, the good bishop, the gentle, patient, merciful father-confessor has passed away to his reward.

He who lies before us in the still majesty of death and arrayed in the insignia of his high and sacred office, was our own pastor, guide and personal friend. Our sorrow deepens in intensity as its object comes the nearer to us. The slow but fatal malady which terminated his earthly existence withdrew from our eyes for several years the once familiar and dignified presence. But we cannot forget his life, his works, his usefulness. He has traced the impress of his character upon materials more durable than the thoughtless hearts of men. Truth indeed bids me say that his own provident care for us, his practical wisdom, has made, for his sad, inevitable event, provision which takes the sting from our grief, the bitterness from our bereavement. He is gone, but he has not left us orphans. He has passed away, but he has left us another pastor and guide.

Human language is not the only medium whereby we can reach and touch the mind and heart of man. A picture sometime conveys more than a volume. There, my brethren, lies before us a picture which conveys in itself a volume, a history, a life. The last word is spoken, the last chapter written, the end is reached. Still forever is the tongue that so often addressed to us words of kindness and encouragement. Pulseless and sealed in death the heart that so often throbbed in kindly sympathy for us in our trials and difficulties. Cold the hand that was so often extended to us in acts of charity and of blessing. The intellect that conceived, and the strong arm that

wrought for us, are powerless for further exertion in our behalf. His account is closed, his lot fixed forever. He has passed beyond the reach of praise and of censure; but it is in accord with a dictate of our nature and a time-honored custom of religion that we should review his life with all the fidelity of truth and with all the calmness which the presence of death inspires. In forming a just estimate of his life and character, it is but just that we should look at his life as a whole. It is but just and fair that we should look at its rise, its progress, its works and its results. Grateful pity views with gentle tenderness the infirmities of the aged servant of God as he descended into the dark shadow of the valley of death, worn out by his labours in the service of his Divine Master. Charity pauses with compassion over that short period, which, with its inevitable decay, closed the history of his labours and usefulness, while truth paints in bold relief, the works and the charities which his busy, fruitful life achieved for religion and society.

I cannot adequately delineate the life and labours of the illustrious dead in the space of time allowed me on an occasion like this. I shall but aim to call up before your minds, the impress which he made upon that portion of the Lord's vineyard, which Holy Church committed to his care and cultivation. A rapid glance at the state of the diocese when he entered upon his labours, and its state when he resigned its administration into other hands, furnishes the best criterion for forming a just estimate of his life and labours. He was born at William's Point, Antigonish, in the year 1810. At an early age he evinced an eager thirst for secular and religious knowledge. We may follow him in our minds as a thoughtful gentle lad, endowed with a clear mind, a bright phantasy and a strong personal character. When he had made such a preparatory course of studies as the schools of the country could furnish, he was sent to Rome by his superiors in the year 1828. Conducted by his good angel he reached the city of the soul in safety and found himself in the centre of spiritual and intellectual light. It is the home of the Vicar of Christ, the Jerusalem of the New Law. It is the grand university of Catholicism whither the ardent youth of every clime, race and language resort in order to slake their thirst for science. There in the centre of Christendom rays of light affect the mind and offer it illumination from every side. The presence of the blessed Eucharist in so many shrines, the relics of the martyrs, the memorials of the saints and great servants of God diffuse a religious aroma in the very atmosphere of the Spiritual City. The history of every country under the sun is represented in the persons of the young votaries of learning from every part of the world. The masters of every science and of every language occupy the chairs of instruction. The true tradition of doctrine is taught and handed down by the most gifted and cultivated intellects of the age. There away from the mist and din of life,

our youthful eleve sojourned for nine years and stored his mind with the treasures of knowledge around him. It is no wonder that these master-influences made a deep and lasting impression upon the mind and character of the bright and thoughtful youth. He applied himself to the study of philosophy and theology with a diligence which elicited the warm encomiums of his professors. In the queen of all the sciences—theology—his diligence won for him the proud distinction of a doctor's cap. His piety, his gentle ways, his stainless life, his solid gifts of intellect, and his fine traits of personal character made him a distinguished student among so many in the great College of the Propaganda. On the eve of leaving Rome for home in June, 1837, Cardinal Fransoni, Prefect of the Propaganda, handed him a letter addressed to the Rt. Rev. Dr. Fraser, bishop of Tanen, and Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia, in which he speaks in glowing terms of the young priest and predicts his future usefulness to religion in his native country. After describing him as one who had gone through the curriculum of studies with the highest praise—*summum a cum laude*—the Cardinal continues: "I commend to your lordship in a special manner this young priest endowed with a beautiful disposition, and adorned with spotless morals and singular piety towards God. I am sure that with God's help he will be eminently useful to religion in your country. For besides the ornaments of mind already mentioned, I can affirm that he has ranked among the leading youths who among the alumni of the Urban College made the greatest proficiency in the study of the sciences."

On his return home the young Roman priest was sent to take charge of the mission of St. Andrews. In his own emphatic way Bishop Fraser told the people of St. Andrew's that in Dr. McKinnon, he was giving them the best feather in his bonnet. At that time it required a hopeful spirit to face the difficulties of the Nova Scotia Missions. That was but the springtide. A great advance has since been made. The country was new and thinly settled, the roads being almost impassable and for the most part mere paths through unbroken forests. The churches were small and few and priests fewer still. In the whole country there was no high school or academy worthy of the name. But the young and learned pastor of St. Andrew's was not the man to succumb to any possible difficulty of this nature. He soon became known far and near for his manly piety, his devotion to duty and his efficiency in the discharge of every sacerdotal duty. Those were happy days for him. His love for his people, his zeal for their growth in virtue and intelligence, won for him the warm affection and devoted loyalty of his flock. Men relate to-day the profound and lasting impression which his dignified presence upon the Altar made upon their minds in their early youth. The instruction of the young in the doctrines and practices of religion found in

him a willing and efficient promoter. His aim was to make his people good, practical and enlightened Catholics. He inculcated by precept and example every pious practice which the Church commends for the promotion of virtue and piety. In his zeal for the beauty and decorum of God's House which is ever characteristic of the true priest, he set about building the present of St. Andrew's Church which to-day yields to but few churches in the country for beauty and elegance. With far-seeing apprehension of the needs of Catholics, who then had not a single representative man in public and official life, he founded and encouraged in every possible way the St. Andrew's Grammar School, which in its day achieved great things for the Catholics of Eastern Nova Scotia. For sixteen years he labored at St. Andrew's, and when the call came to him to go up higher in the hierarchy of the Church, he left St. Andrew's the model parish of the diocese.

The history of the diocese of Arichat covers but a short period. Time forbids but a mere reference to the early period of the history of the Church in this country while under French domination. Early in the 17th century the French took possession of Acadia, and erected military stations in Cape Breton around which small colonies grouped themselves. In 1629 several Jesuits visited the Island and remained to evangelize the natives. When in the Treaty of Utrecht, 1715, the French Crown ceded Acadia to England, Louis XV reserved "Isle Royale" or Cape Breton. Louisburg became the headquarters of the French. When its fortifications were completed in 1720, Louisburg became the *rendezvous* of the missionaries in Cape Breton. The Recollects in France sent several members of the Order to Louisburg to serve in the double capacity of military chaplains and pastors to the inhabitants. From their head quarters the missionaries made frequent excursions to various parts of the Island and also extended their visits to the mainland. The fall of Louisburg and the demolition of its churches and religious houses in the year 1758 proved disastrous to the growth of Catholicity in Eastern Nova Scotia. The Acadians of Cape Breton fled to the Island of St. Pierre de Miquelon, leaving one heroic missionary with the poor Micmacs as forming the whole church in these parts. Between 1780 and 1790 begins really the history of the diocese of Arichat. At that period various causes united in increasing the number of Catholics in the country. The Catholic soldiers of the 84th Highland Regt. disbanded at Halifax in 1783, settled in various counties of the diocese. The Acadians returned from St. Pierre and settled in Eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. In the year 1790 began the important flow of Catholics from both Ireland and Scotland, which continued under the influence of various causes to the time of the passing of the Emancipation Bill by the British Parliament. Up to the year 1817 the nascent missions were ruled from Quebec. In that year the Rev.

Edmund Burke, a man of great zeal, piety and learning, was appointed Bishop of Sion, *i. p. i.* and Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia. When Bishop Burke died in the year 1820, there were no more than five missions with resident pastors, namely, Arichat, Arisaig, Tracadie, Sydney and Cheticamp. From the death of bishop Burke until the year 1827, Nova Scotia was under the jurisdiction of Rev. John Carroll, and Cape Breton under that of Rt. Rev. Aeneas MacEacharn of happy memory, bishop of P. E. Island. In 1827 Rev. William Fraser, who in 1822 followed his countrymen from Scotland to Nova Scotia, was made a bishop of Tanen, *i. p. i.* and Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia, comprising now the diocese of Halifax and that of Arichat. In 1842, Rt. Rev. Dr. Walsh was consecrated in Dublin as coadjutor to Dr. Fraser. In 1844, the Vicariate Apostolic of Nova Scotia was divided by the Holy See into the diocese of Halifax and that of Arichat. Dr. Walsh, whose memory still survives in the affections of the faithful as a man of rare intellectual gifts, extensive learning, deep humility and great zeal in the propagation of the faith, became the first bishop of the See of Halifax, and at the same time Dr. Fraser was transferred to the newly established See of Arichat. In the fall of 1851 Bishop Fraser died at his residence, Antigonish, and on the 24th February of the following year Dr. McKinnon was consecrated at Halifax as Bishop of Arichat.

I have left myself but little space to fill in the bare outlines which I have sketched. Our forefathers in the faith came to this country with the shadow of the penal laws upon them and although they were men of faith, they were but poor and illiterate. Fifty-seven years ago, the good Father William Fraser, whose character was as noble and grand as the towering mountains of his native country followed them. He at once became their father, friend, protector and counsellor. In his day he performed an imperishable work for his creed and his adopted country. When he had finished his course and entered upon his rest, Holy Church made choice of him whom we mourn to-day to succeed him and to continue his work. His gifts of nature and of grace pointed him out at once as the man of Providence for the needs of the time and the country. In the prime of manhood and in the full vigour of his intellectual power, the young and polished bishop stood forth thoroughly equipped for the great work before him. He could now with graceful ease draw upon the treasures of knowledge which he had garnered into the chambers of his memory in the schools of Rome. He spoke and wrote Latin with a purity and elegance which pleased the classic taste of Rome itself. He wielded his pen to some effect in the exposition of the dogmas of his faith and in dissipating the misrepresentations which ignorance or malice attempted to foist upon it. He preached the Gospel with a simple, manly, persuasive eloquence. His mind was

thoroughly imbued with the true ecclesiastical spirit. He cherished noble aims, unselfish aspirations, and a high, generous ideal of what was befitting the public worship of God. I can never forget the impression which his dignified presence made upon my mind when for the first time I listened to him in the sacristy of the old church below pleading before a committee of the men of Antigonish the cause of religion and education in a ready flow of vigorous English. He set to work at once to cultivate and beautify the young vineyard committed to his care. As all reform must begin from the source, he began his great work with his clergy. Shortly after his consecration he summoned around him at Tracadie his clergy—they were but a small band, a *pusillus grex* indeed—and preached a retreat which is yet remembered and spoken of as one of the best and most practical ever given in the diocese. To carry out the regulations of the Council of Trent and to meet the growing needs of the diocese, he founded the ecclesiastical Seminary and sacrificed his own ease and health in training and educating a body of native clergy into whom he wished to infuse a portion of his own generous unselfish spirit. At the same time he raised up, educated and encouraged a body of young men who in time became the representatives of his people in public and professional life. From poverty and obscurity in many instances he raised them, encouraged and watched over them until he saw them fairly started in life. With generous hand he assisted in building neat and commodious churches and presbyteries in every parish in the diocese. When the needs of nearly every parish had been provided for, he set about building this fair edifice where now he lies in death, this proud monument of his burning zeal which shall perpetuate his name and his fame so long as the cross which surmounts it will continue to glitter in the sun. His confidence in divine providence was truly wonderful. It was a subject of amazement to those who knew the limited means which he could command, how much good he achieved with so little. He always acted and worked upon the firm, unwavering conviction that whenever any work is required to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, God will surely second our own active efforts to accomplish it. When some priest came to him pleading the poverty of his people, he encouraged, consoled and cheered him on, and sent him away happy with a hearty 'God bless you' to begin some work for religion which was sure to prosper under his magnetic benediction. Well do I remember how he consoled and encouraged a young priest whose spirits had been for the moment crushed by seeing a church he was engaged in building destroyed by the storm. He encouraged and consoled him not only by words, but handed him a handsome sum of money to begin the work over again. And my admiration for the good and kind bishop was increased by learning as I did incidentally from the pastor of Antigonish that the bishop himself was a few

days afterwards obliged to borrow money to meet the current expenses of his household. I have seen him giving away to poor priests wrestling against difficulties on the missions the very vestments he himself had been using in his own little chapel in the college. He died penniless—the best possible proof of the unselfish ends to which he had consecrated his life. How successful his administration has been is visible everywhere. He began his administration with seventeen priests, nine of whom were natives. He left behind him sixty secular priests, forty-seven of whom are natives, and besides there is a flourishing Monastery in the diocese with eleven regular priests of the great Order of La Trappe. He began with sixteen missions, and now there are in the diocese forty-three parishes with eighty-one churches and about eighty-thousand Catholics. Besides the college here and many excellent schools throughout the diocese, there is a flourishing Convent of religious ladies at Arichat doing excellent work for the secular and religious education of the young women of the country. And not the least of his claims upon our gratitude is that his wise provident care for us has given us the noble and learned prelate, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Cameron, who now so happily rules this diocese. It is but a few weeks since that prelate in a document he sent to the Holy See, described the illustrious dead as one of the most successful bishops in all America. Truly, my brethren, you are a happy and fortunate people in your bishops. I am going to say something which may sound bold, but it is nevertheless true. There was not a more humble bishop in Christendom, nor one who achieved more good with the means at his command. In his better days, before disease fastened upon him, everybody capable of appreciating his character, would not only love him, but be proud of him. He ruled his clergy by the law of love more than by any exercise of authority. His kindness secured for him in return the affection and devoted loyalty of all his clergy. He met the returning penitent with true sacerdotal tenderness and compassion, while he could meet the obstinate wrong-doer with firm and bold front. Never lived the man who was animated less by mere worldly policy than he. His leading thought in all he did had for its object the glory of God and the good of his people. His greatest troubles came from his open, candid, generous, kindly nature.

“His very failings leaned to virtue’s side.”

I will not trespass much further upon your patience. If I attempted to do full justice to his character, where should I make an end? You, yourselves, my brethren, have had ample and daily experience of his kindness and charity. His faith was deep and strong. I do not believe that he ever doubted for a moment, of any article of the revelation of God, as embodied in the doctrines of the

Roman Catholic and Apostolic faith. His faith was not only an infused supernatural grace, a light from Heaven, but it was also a conscious instinct of his nature. It was evident in his words, his actions, his life. It was evident in his genuine, manly, unostentatious piety. It was evident in his strict adherence to every detail of the Ritual in the administration of the sacraments, and in the discharge of the public functions of his sacred office. It was evident in his ever ready loyalty to the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ, and the successor of St. Peter. Two years ago it became necessary, owing to his illness, to get him to sign a certain document, relative to the administration of the diocese. When the Most Rev. Dr. Hannan, Archbishop of Halifax, came down and explained the matter to him, the venerable prelate turned to the priest present on the occasion, and addressing him in Gaelic, asked his opinion as to what he ought to do. The priest ventured upon saying that it was the will of the Holy father, and the good old prelate replied at once: "you are right, I have always obeyed His Holiness, and I will not now begin to disobey him," and seizing the pen, signed the papers.

What shall I say of his charity? God alone knows all his acts of charity to the poor. The most lowly member of his flock had always free access to him. In his presence the poor Mic-mac was as welcome and as much attended to as the highest in the land. Nobody in trouble and affliction ever left his presence without feeling strengthened and consoled by his tender and compassionate sympathy. He was most benign and large-hearted in dealing with sinners. He received with all patience and mercy the poor trembling sinner who knelt at his feet and poured in his ear his tale of misery. He could not tolerate harshness or rigorism in the confessional. I have seen the poor old creatures in the Poor House walk into his room and ask for books to read, and it was a lesson never to be forgotten to witness the fatherly kindness with which he received them, and sought out among his books the favorite volume.

He is dead but his spirit lives. He lives in the great and imperishable works which he achieved for religion and society. He lives in the priesthood whom he instructed, in the pious institutions he reared, in the wise laws and regulations he established, and in the bright example of noble, generous zeal for religion he has given to us all. Oh! my brethren, forget him not. Remember your prelate who has spoken the word of God to you. Remember his faith, prize it above all else, and follow it. Remember him in the imitation of his virtues. Remember him in the charity of your prayers. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May God receive his spirit into the peace and rest and glory of Heaven. Amen.

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